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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KV](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA'S EXPECTED NEGATIVE REACTION TO KOSOVO
CONTINUES

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Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary. Two days after the announcement of Kosovo's independence, the reaction in Russia has been predictably negative. Russian officials have continued their heated rhetoric, repeating the usual arguments. Public reaction has been limited so far to two tiny peaceful protests at U.S. diplomatic missions and tough talk from the usual suspects. The event of the day was a joint statement from both houses of parliament which came close to recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Upper house International Affairs Committee Chair Margelov claimed that Russia planned to treat the two enclaves like Taiwan by opening official presences, but stopping short of formal recognition. Putin is scheduled to meet with Saakashvili in Moscow on the margins of the February 21 CIS Summit. End Summary.

Parliamentary Reaction

12. (SBU) Negative Russian reaction continued in the wake of Kosovo's declaration of independence (reftel). On February 18, Russian Duma Chairman Gryzlov and Federation Council Chairman Mironov issued a joint statement, reiterating Russia's view that recognition of Kosovo independence violates international law and UNSC Resolution 1244. The parliamentary leaders blamed western countries, "above all the United States," for ignoring the interests of a sovereign country and "hushing up" continuing violations of human rights on ethnic grounds, and declared that the leaders of these states would be "directly responsible" for the "inevitable deterioration of, and emergence of new, territorial conflicts." Russia, they asserted, should take "all necessary measures" to protect the principles of international law, justice, and security.

13. (SBU) While rejecting recognition of Kosovo and calling upon the GOR to block its entry into international organizations, the statement did not cross the redline of recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It noted that "the Kosovo situation has become an international precedent" and that other territorial conflicts should be viewed through the lens of the Kosovo scenario. The independent status of Kosovo "creates the necessary prerequisite" for a new formulation of Russia's relations with self-proclaimed states in the former USSR, the statement asserted. South Ossetian leader Kokoity and Abkhaz leader Bagapsh met with Gryzlov on February 18, in closed-door session. In a press conference later that day, the "presidents" argued that their cases for independence were stronger, but did not indicate that they had received any assurances of recognition.

14. (C) After a February 19 meeting with Federation Council International Affairs Chairman Margelov, Italian diplomats told us that Margelov asserted that Russia would adopt a "Taiwanese" model with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia

would open offices -- not embassies -- and would provide economic ties and humanitarian aid. Margelov noted that this would meet the need for a GOR response to Kosovo's independence, but stressed that full recognition was not in Russia's interests. He stated that the GOR was aware this would "confuse" matters with Georgia, but said that Saakashvili knew that Russia "could not remain indifferent" and was expecting a "reasonable reaction." He said that the GOR would also continue on the path toward closer cooperation with Georgia. Chief of the Russian General Staff Baluyevskiy told the press that Kosovo's independence would not affect Russian peacekeepers in Georgia.

Public Statements

15. (SBU) Russian press reported a range of reactions, the vast majority negative, to Kosovo's independence and subsequent recognition:

-- MFA Deputy Foreign Minister Titov said that the recognition of Kosovo would be a test of nations' adherence to international laws. Russia would continue to work to resolve Kosovo's final settlement within international organizations, including the UNSC, OSCE, and Council of Europe.

-- Russia's Special Envoy for the Balkans Botsan-Kharchenko stated that Russia would use all its diplomatic and political influence to demand the annulment of Kosovo's UDI. He did not exclude de facto partition of Kosovo, but noted that the continued Russian diplomatic presence in Pristina.

-- Leader of the Liberal Democratic Party Zhirinovskiy called

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Kosovo's recognition a "flagrant violation of international law," painting Russia as the potential victim of the "unleashing of wars to redraw borders."

-- Communist Party leader Zyuganov advocated the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He "demanded" that Russia "stop yielding to NATO and the EU," stressing that Russia must respond in kind.

-- Chechen rebel "foreign minister" Ferzauli welcomed Kosovo's declaration of independence and supported Kosovo's right to free itself from the state that terrorized it. Ferzauli argued that Chechen rebels have been fighting against "the world's most aggressive and militarized power" for fourteen years.

Protests Insignificant

16. (SBU) On February 18, a non-approved demonstration took place in front of the U.S. Embassy. Approximately 30 KPRF (Communist Party) members protested U.S. interference for about 25 minutes, leaving a "lone protester" for the rest of the day. On February 19, there was another unsanctioned demonstration outside the U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg. Around fifteen KPRF members shouted slogans before being moved along by the police. Five members of the Eurasian Youth Union (EYU), a nationalist, radically anti-Western group attacked the Albanian Embassy in Moscow with eggs in protest of Albania's support for Kosovo, later posting the video on RUtube. Other European embassies reported no demonstrations

Nashi to Belgrade?

17. (SBU) According to a press announcement, up to 100 members of Nashi, the Kremlin-friendly youth organization, will apply for visas to travel to Belgrade. Nashi leaders noted that the group would meet with youth organizations or

government representatives who represent youth in Belgrade,
but doubted they would be permitted to go to Kosovo.
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